1:Dobrizhoffer M-5 (ca. 1760) 1822
SI4 Abipon. SI4

181 A light rumour, smoke seen from a distance,
648 strange foot-marks, or the unseasonable barking of dogs, fills them with suspicions that their lives are in danger from the enemy, especially when they dread their vengeance for slaughters which themselves have lately committed. The
756 task of tranquillizing and preparing their minds
787 devolves upon the jugglers, who, whenever any thing is to be feared, or any thing to be done, consult the evil spirit. About the beginning of the night a company of old women assemble in a huge tent. The mistress of the band, an old woman remarkable for wrinkles and grey hairs, strikes every now and then two large discordant drums, at intervals of four sounds, and whilst these instruments return a horrible bellowing, she, with a harsh voice, mutters kinds of songs, like a person mourning. The
[533] surrounding women, with their hair dishevelled and their breasts bare, rattle gourds, and loudly chaunt funeral verses, which are accompanied by a continual motion of the feet, and tossing about of the arms. But this infernal music is rendered still more insupportable by other performers, who keep constantly beating pans which are covered with deers' skin, and sound very acutely, with a stick. In this manner the night is passed. At day-break all flock to the old woman's tent, as to a Delphic oracle. The singers receive little presents, and

1:Dobrizhoffer M-5 (ca. 1760) 1822
SI4 Abipon SI4

does' skins, which makes the most ridiculous noise you can conceive. To every three or four gourds one of these drums answers. But what offends the ear most is the shouting of the mourners. They modulate their voices, like singers, and make trills and quavers mingled with groans. After chaunting some mournful staves in this manner they all cease at intervals, and, changing their voices from the highest to the lowest key, suddenly utter a very shrill hissing. You would swear that a knife had been laid to their throats. By this sudden howl they signify that they are seized with rage, uttering all sorts of imprecations on the author of the death, whoever he be. Sometimes, intermitting this chaunt, they recite a few verses in a declamatory tone, in which they extol the good qualities and deeds of the deceased, and in a querulous voice endeavour to excite the compassion and vengeance of the survivors. At other times they mingle tears with their wailings, tears extorted not by grief, but by habit, or, perhaps, by exhaustion. Most of them carry about some little gift or remembrance of the deceased, as emu feathers, glass-beads, a knife, or a dagger. I will now describe their method of lamenting by night.

About evening, all the women that are invited

1:Dobrizhoffer M-5 (ca. 1760) 1822
814 Abipon 814

the family to the public celebration of victories. 203
On his departure, he is dismissed by the women 527
with the usual percussion of the lips. In the 727
same manner he enters the dwellings of the
other hordesmen, always accompanied by a [554
crowd of boys. The office of crier, which the 756]
noble Abipones despise, is generally performed 624
by some juggler of advanced age and low birth.
Meantime they furnish the house, appointed for 527
the meeting, with a hasty apparatus. The 727.
floor is covered with the skins of tigers and of
kine, upon which the guests sit. A temporary [417]
erection is made of reeds, upon which they
place the hairy scalps of their slain enemies, as
trophies. When they prefer celebrating the
victory without the tent in the open air, they
hang these trophies upon spears fixed upright
in the circle in which they sit. At sun-set, the [415]
persons invited all flock to the appointed place,
where they sit down on the ground, having
leathern vessels of mead set in the midst of
them, though the drinking does not commence
till about morning, the whole night being spent
in chaunting their victories.

They never sing all at once, but only two at 527
a time, always greatly varying their voices from 533
high to low, one either taking up, or following, 727
or interrupting the other, and sometimes
accompanying him. Now one, now the other,

1:Dobrizhoffer M-5 (ca. 1760) 1822
514 Abipon 514

527 is silent for a short interval. The tones vary
533 according to the subject of the song, with many
727 inflexions of the sound, and, if I may so express myself, a good deal of shaking. He who, by a quicker motion of the throat, can now suspend the song for a while, now protract, and now interrupt it with groans, or laughter, or can imitate the bellowing of a bull, or the tremulous voice of a kid,—he will gain universal applause. No European would deny that these savage singers inspired him with a kind of melancholy and horror, so much are the ears, and even the mind affected by that deadly chaunting, the darkness adding greatly to the mournful effect.
534 One of the singers rattles a gourd filled with maize seeds, to the time of the music. Sometimes the gourd alone preludes the singing, as in a band of musicians; at others, it follows the voice of the singer, and very seldom rests for ever so little a while. When two are singing at a time, it is wonderful to hear so much concord in such discordant voices. You never observe them hesitate or pause: for they do not sing extemporaneously, but what has been long studied beforehand. The songs are restricted by no metrical laws, but sometimes have a rhythmical sound. The number of verses is regulated, not according to the pleasure of the singer, but according to the variety of the

1;Dobrizhoffer M-5 (ca. 1760) 1822
S14 Abipon S14

subject. Nothing but warlike expeditions, slaughters, and spoils of the enemy, taking of towns, plundering of waggons and estates, burning and depopulating colonies of the Spaniards, and other tragedies of that kind furnish the savages with subjects for singing and rejoicing. These events, together with the place, and time, where, and when they happened, they describe; not rudely, but with considerable elegance. Struck, as it were, with poetic rage, by appropriate words, and modulations of the voice, they contrive to express indignation, fear, threatening, or joy. Though, in order not to damp the hilarity, they scarce make any mention of the deaths, and wounds of the Abipones, and employ themselves exclusively in exaggerating the slaughter of the enemy. During the time that these songs are chaunted, a period of many hours, not one of the auditors dares utter a word, and though night itself persuades sleep, you will not see one of them even yawn.

As all singers have the fault which Horace complains of in them, namely, that when they once begin, they will never leave off; the two chaunters are admonished to conclude their song, by women who stand around, separated from the men, and who signify to the vocal pair, after they have sung about a quarter of

1:Dobrizhoffer M-5 (ca. 1760) 1822
SI4 Abipon SI4

an hour, that it is time to desist, by repeated precussion of their lips, and by pronouncing the little words *Kla leyà*, it is enough. With this admonition, they immediately comply, and conclude the magnificent commemoration of their mighty deeds with *Gramackka akanì:* Such then we are. Another pair then succeeds to the former, and in this manner the singing is protracted till the morning. Then, indeed, the scene is changed, the drinking commences, and their dry and weary throats are refreshed with that American nectar made either of honey, or the alfaroba. The women, and the unmarried men are excluded from these drinking-parties, though the latter are allowed to drink mead in private, as the women to drink pure honey, and eat the raw alfaroba.

To seek honey in the woods for making this drink, is the business of the men, but the whole labour of preparing it falls upon the women, who have to knock down the alfarobas from the trees, to carry them home on horseback, to pound them in mortars, to pour water on them, and to dress the hides which serve to hold the liquor. The method of their construction is this: the feet are cut off, the hide is made square; its four sides are then raised to the height of two spans, so that it receives at the bottom any liquor that you may pour in, and holds it without spilling a drop.